

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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R 211418Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1265

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KUWAIT 3667

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, KU
SUBJ: KUWAITI DESIRE FOR MILITARY PATROL CRAFT

REF: (A) 76 STATE 063992, (B) STATE 148827, (C) 77 KUWAIT 2914,
(C) KUWAIT 2012.

1. PLOFF DISCUSSED SUMMARY OF PATROL BOAT SPECIFICATIONS (REF B) WITH MOHAMMED SALAM, OF THE STAFF OF THE MOD UNDERSEC, JUNE 21. CONTRARY TO DEPARTMENT'S UNDERSTANDING AND OUR EXPECTATIONS, MOD DESIRES TO PROCURE THESE VESSELS ON AN FMS BASIS, RATHER THAN BY COMMERCIAL CONTRACT, ACCORDING TO SALAM. THIS DESIRE WAS CONFIRMED TO POLOFF BY COL. ABDUL AZIZ AL-SAYEGH, ARMED FORCES ADCS/LOGISTICS. THIS WOULD ENTAIL DEPARTMENT POLICY REVIEW OF 1976 DECISION TO SUGGEST TO GOK THAT IT PROCURE PATROL BOATS COMMERCIALY (REF A).

2. SALAM ADDED THAT, IN HIS OPINION, THE GOK WOULD NOT BUY PATROL VESSELS EXCEPT ON A GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT BASIS. ASKED ABOUT THE RATIONALE FOR THIS, HE ALLUDED TO MOD'S DESIRE NOT TO HAVE TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH MANUFACTURER'S REPRESENTATIVES AND THE FEELING WITHIN MOD THAT COMPANIES DO NOT "GO STRAIGHT," AN APPARENT REFERENCE TO FAULTY CONTRACT PERFORMANCE. HE
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SAID, MOREOVER, THAT NO FOREIGN FIRMS HAD BEEN CONTACTED, AND NOT EVEN THE EMBASSIES IN KUWAIT OF POTENTIAL SUPPLIER COUNTRIES HAVE RECEIVED SPECIFICATIONS. INSTEAD, THE GOK HAS CONTACTED SUPPLIER GOVERNMENTS VIA KUWAITI DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS, AS IN WASHINGTON. (HE WOULD NOT PROVIDE COPY OF SPECIFICATIONS TO POLOFF BUT ALLOWED HIM TO READ THEM. REQUEST DEPARTMENT POUCH COPY OF SPECIFICATIONS.

3. SALAM ALSO SAID THAT ANY INQUIRIES OR CLARIFICATION"
DESIRED BY USG SHOULD BE SENT VIA KUWAITI DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS --
THIS WAS "MORE PROPER."

4. IN RESPONSE TO POLOFF'S QUESTION ABOUT WHAT THE GOK EXPECTED
THE USG TO DO INITIALLY, IN RESPONSE TO RECEIPT OF THE PATROL
BOAT SPECIFICATIONS, SALAM SAID THAT MOD WANTS THE USG TO
SOLICIT PROPOSED SPECIFICATIONS, PRICES, ETC. FROM POTENTIAL
US SUPPLIERS (MORE THAN ONE, PREFERABLY) AND TO FORWARD THEM
FOR KUWAITI REVIEW. THIS SHOULD ONLY BE DONE IN CASES WHERE
US MANUFACTURERS COULD COME CLOSE TO KUWAITI REQUIREMENTS,
AND ALL PROPOSALS SHOULD BE FOR "PROVEN DESIGN" (I.E.,
THE VESSEL TYPES ALREADY IN EXISTENCE).

5. APART FROM SPECIFICATIONS FOR VESSELS, SALAM STATED THAT
THE MOD WOULD EXPECT A PURCHASE CONTRACT TO INCLUDE AN ARRANGEMENT
FOR A 10 YEAR SUPPLY OF SPARES AND FOR NAVAL TRAINING OF AN
AS YET UNKNOWN MAGNITUDE.

6. COMMENT: UNDER THE CONDITIONS OUTLINED BY SALAM, IT APPEARS
APPROPRIATE FOR THE DEPARTMENT TO REVIEW THE QUESTION OF FMS
SALE AGIN AND TO PROVIDE A RESPONSE ON THIS TO THE KUWAITI
EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. IN THIS REVIEW, THE FOLLOWING
CONSIDERATIONS APPEAR GERMANE:

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A. THE ASSERTION THAT THE GOK WILL PURCHASE VESSELS ONLY ON
A GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT BASIS IS VERY PROBABLY TRUE. KUWAITI
DESIRE TO INVOLVE THE USG SOMEHOW IN EVEN COMMERCIAL US-SOURCE
MATERIAL PROCUREMENT HAS BEEN A RECURRING THEME OF OUR SECURITY
ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP.

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B. IN ADDITION TO ITS AVERSION TO DEALING WITH PRIVATE FIRMS, THE GOK UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD WANT TO INVOLVE THE USG IN THE SALE IN ORDER TO HAVE IT "TRAIN A NAVY." THIS IS THE KIND OF ARRANGEMENT WHICH THE GOK MADE WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT (REF C), WELL BEFORE THE VOSPER-THORNEYCROFT DEAL FELL THROUGH (REF D), TO PROVIDE BOTH BASIC AND ADVANCED TRAINING FOR CREWS.

C. IN TERMS OF TYPES OF EQUIPMENT, THE SIX-VESSEL PACKAGE DESCRIBED REF B APPEARS TO US TO FALL WITHIN THE PARAMETERS OF THE 1976 DECISION IN PRICIPLE TO PERMIT VESSEL SALES THROUGH COMMERCIAL SOURCES (REF A). MOREOVER, NO MISSILE ARMAMENT IS REQUESTED THIS TIME, AND THE NEW KUWAITI SPECIFICATIONS CALL FOR FEWER VESSELS (SIX RATHER THAN TEN) TO PERFORM MISSIONS ALONG THE LINES OF THOSE THE KUWAITIS ORIGINALLY ENVISIONED. IN TERMS OF VESSEL SIZE, THE TWO "CORVETTES" APPEAR TO BE SOMEWHAT LARGER THAN WHAT THE KUWAITIS ORIGINALLY HAD IN MIND (65 VERSUS ABOUT 40 METERS), BUT WE DO NOT SEE THIS AS A MATERIAL CHANGE WHICH SHOULD AFFECT POLICY. WE DO NOT KNOW, HOWEVER, HOW THE USG DECISION NOT TO SELL THE HARPOON MISSILE TO KUWAIT (MADE CONCURRENTLY WITH THE DECISION TO GO COMMERCIAL) AFFECTED THE FMS-VERSUS-COMMERCIAL QUESTION IN 1976.

D. WITH THE PENDING (BUT NOT YET CONGRESSIONALLY-APPROVED) SALE OF HARPOON MISSILES TO SAUDI ARABIA, WE MIGHT EXPECT SOME CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESSURE FROM THE GOK IN THE FUTURE FOR SALE OF THIS WEAPON, BUT NOT, APPARENTLY, WITH THE CURRENT VESSEL PACKAGE. IN SOME KUWAITI MILITARY CIRCLES, THERE REMAINS STRONG INTEREST IN HARPOON, AND WE NOTE THAT THE CURRENT SPECIFICATIONS CALL FOR VESSELS WHICH COULD BE FITTED WITH MORE SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS IN THE FUTURE. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS REFERS TO SURFACE-TO-SURFACE MISSILES, THOUGH THIS WOULD PROBABLY COME TO LIGHT AS DISCUSSION OF SPECIFICATIONS WENT ON.

E. IN THE CONTEXT OF AN FMS SALE, THE FEASIBILITY OF THE USG COLLECTING AND CONVEYING US-SOURCE PROPOSALS TO THE GOK IN THE MANNER DESCRIBED IN PARA. 4 APPEARS OPEN TO QUESTION. DOD MIGHT BE CONSULTED ON THIS, SHOULD FMS SALE BE FAVORED BY DEPARTMENT.

F. BEFORE COMMITTING THE USG TO AN FMS SALE WHICH INCLUDES

A TRAINING ELEMENT, WE WOULD WANT TO SPECIFY PRECISELY THE
MANPOWER REQUIREMENTS (INCLUDING NUMBERS, TIMING OF TRAINING,
TYPES OF TRAINING, ETC.), GIVEN CURRENT MILITARY MANPOWER
CONSTRAINTS IN THE KUWAITI FORCES.

7. WE FIND RATHER CUMBERSOME THE GOK METHOD OF APPROACH IN
ELICITING PROPOSALS ON PATROL CRAFT. IF THE USG SHOULD DECIDE
TO MEET THE KUWAITI REQUEST, A WAY SHOULD BE FOUND TO INVOLVE
THIS EMBASSY, PARTICULARLY USLOK, IN NEGOTIATION AND IMPLEMENTATION
AS SOON AS FEASIBLE THEREAFTER.
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